

Philosophy 414/514: British Empiricism

Spring 2015
MW 3:30 – 4:45
LA3 110

Professor Marcy P. Lascano

Office: MHB 901

Office Hours: Mondays 5:00 – 6:00, Wednesdays 11:00 – 12:00, and by appointment

E-Mail: marcy.lascano@csulb.edu

Course Texts

Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (Hackett, 1994)

Hobbes and Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity (Cambridge, 2003)

Margaret Cavendish, *Observations on Experimental Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2001)

Isaac Newton, *Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge, 2004)

Emilie du Châtelet, *Selected Philosophical and Scientific Writings* (University of Chicago, 2009)

John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* (Hackett, 1996)

David Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Hackett, 1993)

Course Description

There are a number of narratives that one can tell about the 17th and 18th century. One such narrative involves the dispute between Continental Rationalists and British Empiricists. According to this narrative, on one side you have Descartes and those who think the foundation of all our knowledge is reason, and on the other side you have Locke and all those who think experience is the basis of human knowledge. According to this narrative, in the British Empiricist class we should spend the entire semester reading and discussing the theory of ideas and problems like the veil of perception. We should read only Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. However, we're not going to do that because I fell asleep twice just while writing this.

We will, of course, discuss epistemology, but we are also going to look at some of the really interesting things that these philosophers have to say about, for example, personal identity, freedom of the will, reason, scientific methodology, substance, the transfer of motion, and other such things. We will begin by reading some Thomas Hobbes, we will then move to Margaret Cavendish, Isaac Newton, Emilie du Châtelet, John Locke and David Hume. Our task will be to develop a broad understanding of the various concerns and problems that were debated amongst these British philosophers.

Course Learning Objectives

The course objectives are threefold: (1) to familiarize students with the philosophical thought of 17th and 18th century empiricists, to understand the broad context in which these philosophers developed their ideas, to understand the relationships between philosophy and science during this period; (2) to encourage and facilitate careful and thoughtful reading of text, including the identification of arguments; and (3) to improve critical thought and reasoning, including the evaluation of arguments.

Course Requirements

Undergraduates – Three Take-Home Essays (25% each): There will be three take-home essay exams. Each exam will consist of two to three questions and be 3-4 pages in length.

Class Participation (25%) – For each day's reading, I will post two response questions. Each student should write up a paragraph, outline, or argument answering each question before the beginning of class. Before each class period I will randomly select two students to present their answers at some point during our class discussion. These two students will need to turn in their written answers as well. If you are selected and are not in class that day, your class participation grade will go down one letter grade unless you provide documentation of a University approved excused absence (see definition below).

Graduates – Two Take-Home Essays (25% each): Graduate students will do take-home exams one and two. Each exam will consist of two to three questions and be 3-4 pages in length.

Term Paper: (25%) Each graduate student will write a research paper on a topic agreed upon by the student and the professor. Term papers will be at least eight pages in length and no more than twenty. The professor will provide guidance as far as suitability of topics and relevant primary and secondary literature.

Class Participation (25%) – For each day's reading, I will post two response questions. Each student should write up a paragraph, outline, or argument answering each question before the beginning of class. Before each class period I will randomly select two students to present their answers at some point during our class discussion. These two students will need to turn in their written answers as well. If you are selected and are not in class that day, your class participation grade

will go down one letter grade unless you provide documentation of a University approved excused absence (see definition below).

Missed Work:

In this course, documentation is required for each excused absence. If you have a documented excused absence, notify the professor immediately. How work will be made up will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

University policy on EXCUSED ABSENCES:

1. Illness or injury to the student.
2. Death, injury, or serious illness of an immediate family member or the like.
3. Religious reasons (California Education Code section 89320).
4. Jury duty or government obligation.
5. University sanctioned or approved activities (ex: artistic performances, forensics presentations, participation in research conferences, intercollegiate athletic activities, student government, required class field trips).

General Policies

Special Accommodations:

If any student requires special accommodations for testing or lectures, please let me know within the first 2 weeks of the semester. It is the student's responsibility to contact Disabled Student Services and make special arrangements.

In Class Conduct:

- Cell phones, beepers, video games, and MP3 players will be turned off during class.
- Computers may be used in class for the sole purpose of taking notes. No instant messaging, no game playing, web surfing, or completing of other assignments during class. If you wish to do these things – take it somewhere else. These activities are disrespectful and disrupt both the instructor and your fellow classmates.
- Students will not speak out of turn in class, or be disrespectful towards other students or the instructor.
- Failure to abide by any of these rules of conduct will result in dismissal from the course.

Communications:

If you need to reach me, send me an email (marcy.lascano@csulb.edu). I'm online often, and can usually respond within 24 hours (often much sooner). You may also come by my office or call my office for brief questions. For longer discussions regarding course readings or examinations, please come to my office hours or contact me to make an appointment.

University Withdrawal Policies

Application for withdrawal from the University or from a class must be officially filed by the student at the Admissions and Records Office whether the student has ever attended the class or not; otherwise, the student will receive a grade of "WU" (unauthorized incomplete) in the course. Application for withdrawal is made at the Admissions and Records Office. (See also the California State University policy on "Return of Fees.")

1. Withdrawal during the first two weeks of instruction: Students may withdraw during this period and the course will not appear on their permanent records. To do this a student must file a Complete Withdrawal Application to drop all classes or a Change of Program Form for a specific class or classes. Fees are not refundable after the second week of classes.
2. Withdrawal after the second week of instruction and prior to the final three weeks of instruction: Withdrawal during this period are permissible only for serious and compelling reasons. The procedure for withdrawal during this period are the same as in item 1, except that the approval signatures of the instructor and department chairperson are required. The request and approvals will state the reasons for the withdrawal. Students should be aware that the definition of "serious and compelling reasons" as applied by faculty and administrators may become narrower as the semester progresses. Copies of such approvals are kept on file in the Admissions and Records Office.
3. Withdrawal during the final three weeks of instruction: Withdrawal during the final three weeks of instruction are not permitted except in cases such as accident or serious illness where the circumstances causing the withdrawal are clearly beyond the student's control and the assignment of an Incomplete is not practical. Ordinarily, withdrawal in this category will involve total withdrawal from the campus except that a Credit / No Credit grade or an Incomplete may be assigned for courses in which sufficient work has been completed to permit an evaluation to be made. Request for permission to withdraw under these circumstances must be made in writing on forms available in the Office of Admissions and Records. The requests and approvals will state the reasons for the withdrawal. These requests must be approved by the instructor, department chairperson, and dean of the school. Copies of such approvals are kept on file in the Office of Admissions and Records.

Cheating:

Any instance of cheating will result in a grade of 'F' for the course – no exceptions. The most prevalent form of cheating is plagiarism. Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of another individual's work as one's own. In short, plagiarism is a form of dishonesty. **Don't be dishonest.**

Definition of Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the act of using the ideas or work of another person or persons as if they were one's own, without giving credit to the source. Such an act is not plagiarism if it is ascertained that the ideas were arrived at through independent reasoning or logic or where the thought or idea is common knowledge.

Acknowledgment of an original author or source must be made through appropriate references, i.e., quotation marks, footnotes, or commentary. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to, the following: the submission of a work, either in part or in whole, completed by another; failure to give credit for ideas, statements, facts or conclusions which rightfully belong to another; in written work, failure to use quotation marks when quoting directly from another, whether it be a paragraph, a sentence, or even a part thereof; or close and lengthy paraphrasing of another's writing or programming. A student who is in doubt about the extent of acceptable paraphrasing should consult the instructor.

Students are cautioned that, in conducting their research, they should prepare their notes by (a) either quoting material exactly (using quotation marks) at the time they take notes from a source; or (b) departing completely from the language used in the source, putting the material into their own words. In this way, when the material is used in the paper or project, the student can avoid plagiarism resulting from verbatim use of notes. Both quoted and paraphrased materials must be given proper citations.

Definition of Cheating

Cheating is defined as the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain or aiding another to obtain academic credit for work by the use of any dishonest, deceptive or fraudulent means. Examples of cheating during an examination include, but are not limited to the following: copying, either in part or in whole, from another's test or examination; discussion of answers or ideas relating to the answers on an examination or test unless such discussion is specifically authorized by the instructor; giving or receiving copies of an examination without the permission of the instructor; using or displaying notes, "cheat sheets," or other information or devices inappropriate to the prescribed test conditions, as when the test of competence includes a test of unassisted recall of information, skill, or procedure; or allowing someone other than the officially enrolled student to represent the same. Also included is plagiarism as defined and altering or interfering with the grading procedures.

It is often appropriate for students to study together or to work in teams on projects. However, such students should be careful to avoid the use of unauthorized assistance, and to avoid any implication of cheating, by such means as sitting apart from one another in examinations, presenting the work in a manner which clearly indicates the effort of each individual, or such other method as is appropriate to the particular course.

Lecture Topics, Reading Assignments, and Exams

January 21st – Introduction to Course, Syllabus, Course Expectations

January 26th – Hobbes, *Leviathan*, §1-7

January 28th – Hobbes, *Leviathan*, §12 and §37

February 2nd – Hobbes, *Of Liberty and Necessity*, §1-17

February 4th – Hobbes, *Of Liberty and Necessity*, §18-38

February 9th – Cavendish, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* "Argumental Discourse"

February 11th – Cavendish, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, Matter, Motion, and Perception and *Grounds* Appendix (handout)

February 16th – Final discussion of Hobbes and Cavendish – Take Home Exam 1 Handed Out

February 18th – NO CLASS – INSTRUCTOR OUT

February 23rd – Newton, *De Gravitatione*, pp. 12-27

February 25th – Newton, *De Gravitatione*, pp. 28-39

March 2nd – Newton, 86-93

March 4th – Newton, 127-140

March 9th – Emilie du Châtelet, *Foundations of Physics*, 116-138

March 11th – Emilie du Châtelet, *Foundations of Physics*, 138-163

March 16th – Emilie du Châtelet, *Foundations of Physics*, 163-187

March 18th – Final discussion of Newton and du Châtelet – Take Home Exam 2 Handed Out

March 23rd – Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Innate Ideas, pp. 4-32

March 25th – Locke, *Essay*, Theory of Ideas, pp. 33-60

March 30th – SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

April 1st – SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

April 6th – NO CLASS – INSTRUCTOR AT CONFERENCE

April 8th – Locke, *Essay*, Of Power (liberty) 93-114

April 13th – Locke, *Essay*, Substance 117-129 and Identity and Diversity 132-150

April 15th – Locke, *Essay*, Existence 274-292

April 20th – Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, pp. 1-25

April 22nd – Hume, *Enquiry*, pp. 25-53

April 27th – Hume, *Enquiry*, pp. 53-72

April 29th – Hume, *Enquiry*, pp. 72-90

May 4th – Hume, *Enquiry*, pp. 90-114

May 6th – Final discussion of Locke and Hume – Take Home Exam 3 Handed Out

Final exams and papers are due during our final examination period on Wednesday, May 13, 2015 at 2:45PM